



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Councilmembers Jones and Rigby to Introduce Legislation to Establish a Fee on Disposable Bags

Ellicott City, MD (October 25, 2019) - Howard County Councilmembers Opel Jones and Christiana Rigby will introduce Council Bill 64-2019 on Monday, November 4th, to establish a fee on disposable plastic bags provided to consumers in Howard County.

According to the National Resources Defense Council, the average family in the United States uses roughly 1,500 plastic bags every year, yet very few of these bags end up being recycled. This amounts to over 100 billion plastic bags used annually in the United States, which often end up in our streams, trees, oceans, and habitats.

To preserve the local ecosystems and watersheds that contribute to the environmental stability of Howard County, this legislation aims to decrease the use of plastic bags, which may contribute to the degradation of the local environment. CB 64-2019 would require a five-cent fee for disposable plastic shopping bags that are 2.25 millimeters thick, as authorized by Maryland House Bill 1166. Plastic bag fees have been implemented in numerous jurisdictions across the United States, successfully resulting in major reductions in plastic bag use.

"The rampant overuse of disposable plastics is a significant danger to our environment, our wildlife, and a sustainable future in Howard County. With this fee on plastic bag use, Howard County will join dozens of jurisdictions that have already taken this step toward a cleaner and more environmentally-conscious world," said Rigby. "I am incredibly grateful to the community voices and advocates that have organized around this much-needed change, ensuring that we leave behind a clean planet for our children."

"I am excited to join Council Chairperson Rigby in introducing this historic legislation for Howard County," said Jones. "As a parent and council representative, I believe it is imperative to protect, promote, and enhance practices which will ensure an eco-friendly future for our children and growing community. This bill is a proactive solution to hopefully decrease the usage of disposable plastic bags while generating revenue for environmental causes."

Revenue from the fee will be used to establish the Disposable Plastics Reduction Fund. This fund will enable the Howard County Office of Community Sustainability along with partners to create programs that provide reusable bags, develop environmental education programs focusing on water quality and water pollution, stream clean-ups, and anti-littering, and promote activities to educate the public about the benefits and methods of reducing the use of disposable plastics. If enacted, this legislation will be enforced beginning on July 1, 2020, offering a six-month grace period for retailers to become acclimated to the law.

The proposed legislation was pre-filed on October 24th and will be introduced at the legislative session on Monday, November 4th. Testimony will be accepted at the legislative public hearing up to 7:00 PM, Monday, November 18th. Howard County residents can sign up to testify after November 4th by visiting <https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/otestimony/>. If you would like to submit your testimony electronically, please email councilmail@howardcountymd.gov.

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